

as to organise and direct the revolution by the establishment of a central committee at Heilbron. It was as members of this committee that they pressed their project into the arena of practical politics. Its keynote is the rehabilitation of the empire, not on the basis of the Bible, but of a sweeping reform of existing social and political institutions. Though it appeals to natural right and Christian freedom, it is constructive as well as destructive, and its moderation is as patent as that of the Twelve Articles. It demands, in the first place, the secularisation of ecclesiastical property for the common good, though compensation is to be allowed for loss incurred thereby. The community shall choose and support its own pastor, who shall concern himself solely with his spiritual duties. Princes and nobility are not deprived of their status. The old social hierarchy of princes, counts, knights, squires, burghers, peasants, shall remain. But the higher classes shall cease to oppress the people, and act towards them in a Christian spirit, and shall lose their feudal jurisdictions, their sovereign rights, and become imperial officials, the administrators of the central authority, the emperor. All leagues within the empire shall cease, and equal law and justice be meted out to all in accordance with natural right. To which end a nexus of courts, from the Reichskammergericht, the supreme imperial court, downwards to the court of the rural commune, shall be established, and each class shall have its share in the administration of justice. From these courts doctors of the Roman law shall be excluded, and be relegated to the lecture rooms of the universities. An imperial coinage, with local mints, shall take the place of a multitudinous currency ; taxes, tolls, and other oppressive exactions cease, the emperor only to be entitled to levy a general tax every ten years ; and the oppressive monopolist companies be abolished. Finally, all classes in this reformed empire are to live in brotherly love, and conform in spirit and action to the law of God and of nature as well as the law of the land.

Such, in general, are the ideas embodied in what is known as the Peasants' Rising or the "Boer War" of 1525. The movement embraced a moderate and an extreme party—the sober-minded and the fanatic, the honest man and the villain, the man of honour and the cut-throat, the bankrupt knight